

OLD HOSPITALS AND RELIGIOUS HOUSES OF CANTERBURY.

THE fame of Canterbury Cathedral, the deep interest which belongs of right to the remains of St. Augustine's Abbey and the still more venerable walls of St. Martin's Church, naturally attract strangers from all parts of the world. But besides these renowned sanctuaries, the city itself contains many other antiquities, which, although less frequently visited, are well worthy of notice and fully repay the traveller's attention.

True it is, Canterbury no longer presents the imposing appearance it wore of old, when Camden and Leland wrote of its glories, and pronounced its private buildings to be equal in beauty to those of any city in England, while the number and magnificence of its churches was altogether unsurpassed. To-day Ethelbert's Tower no longer rivals the grace and majesty of the Angel Steeple; the lofty walls, with their twenty-one watch-towers, during ages the boast of Canterbury, no more enclose the city in their complete circle as in the days when Chaucer's Knight, after paying his devotions at the Martyr's shrine, went out to see their strength, and 'pointed to his son both the peril and the dout.' The once mighty Castle of the Conqueror is turned into a coal-hole, and of all the seven gateways, fortified with massive round towers, with drawbridge and portcullis, one alone, Simon of Sudbury's noble Westgate, remains to tell the story of their past splendour. But still Canterbury has much that is interesting and attractive both to the antiquary and artist. Her old streets are full of quaint corners and picturesque objects—timber-framed houses, still retaining their overhanging eaves, their carved door-posts and corbels, their oriel windows and square lattices; taverns with ornamental ironwork wreathed in fantastic shapes about their painted sign-boards; ancient hospitals, founded in Norman times, and possessing charters and records which afford many a curious glimpse into the byways of mediaeval life.

Above all, the old quarters of the city are rich in historical associations of the most varied kind. Scarcely a street but has its tradition, scarcely a lane but recalls some great name or memorable event. At every turn there is something to make us stop and ponder. Now we walk under a Roman wall, its old tiles gay with a splendid growth of crimson valerian; now past the ruins of a priory or nunnery founded by Lanfranc or Anselm; then, again, we discover some house or church mentioned in a twelfth-

century charter, some plot of ground over which the monks of Christ Church and their rivals of St. Augustine's wrangled seven or eight centuries ago. Or else our attention is arrested by a fine old portal at the entrance of a brewery, and we find that here in Tudor times was the mansion of the Ropers, and that close by, in old St. Dunstan's Church, lies the head of Sir Thomas More, buried in one grave with his faithful daughter Margaret,—

‘ Her who clasp'd in her last trance
Her murder'd father's head.’

Where nothing else is left, the old names linger still to keep alive the remembrance of the past. The little borough of Stablegate at the end of Palace Street reminds us that here Augustine and his little band found their first resting-place on English soil; in the words of Thorn, the monk-chronicler of after days, ‘here these which had been wearied with carrying their burdens in the way, were unladen and stabled.’ The Leper Hospital of St. Lawrence by the Old Dover Road gives its name to the cricket-ground. The church of St. Mary Bredman is so called from a bread and fish market that took place under its walls. A red pump on a house in Palace Street records the sign of the Red Well, where the Rush Market was held. The spot now called the Butter Market, just outside the great gate of Christ Church, was known during ages as the Bull's Stake, from an old custom mentioned by Somner ‘of chasing and baiting of bulls by the city butchers before their killing.’ A market for the sale of all manner of provisions was held here twice a-week from Plantagenet times, and the street between this place and Angel Lane was termed La Polettria, from the quantities of poultry sold there. At the Bull's Stake stood in those days a tall market cross, gilt and painted, from which all royal decrees were proclaimed; and it was to this cross, exactly opposite the gate of Christ Church, that the writ summoning Archbishop Stratford to appear before Parliament was affixed by order of Edward III. The name of Mercery Lane—La Merceria—still recalls the covered colonnade and rows of booths and stalls where, in pilgrimage days, a brisk sale of ampullæ, brooches, and other Canterbury tokens, was carried on. Even royal personages came here to buy mementoes of their visit to the shrine of

St. Thomas; and the Black Prince's captive, King John, on his release from captivity, purchased a knife for the Count of Auxerre in the Mercery.

At the corner of Mercery Lane and High Street is the old house which tradition points out as the hostelry where Chaucer's immortal company were entertained,—

'At Checkers of the Hope, that every man doth know,'

'the faire inn,' restored by Thomas Chillenden, the great building Prior of Christ Church. But within the last few years the spacious dormitory known as the 'Hall of the Hundred Beds' has been destroyed by fire, and the stone arches of the ground-floor are all that remain of the original building.

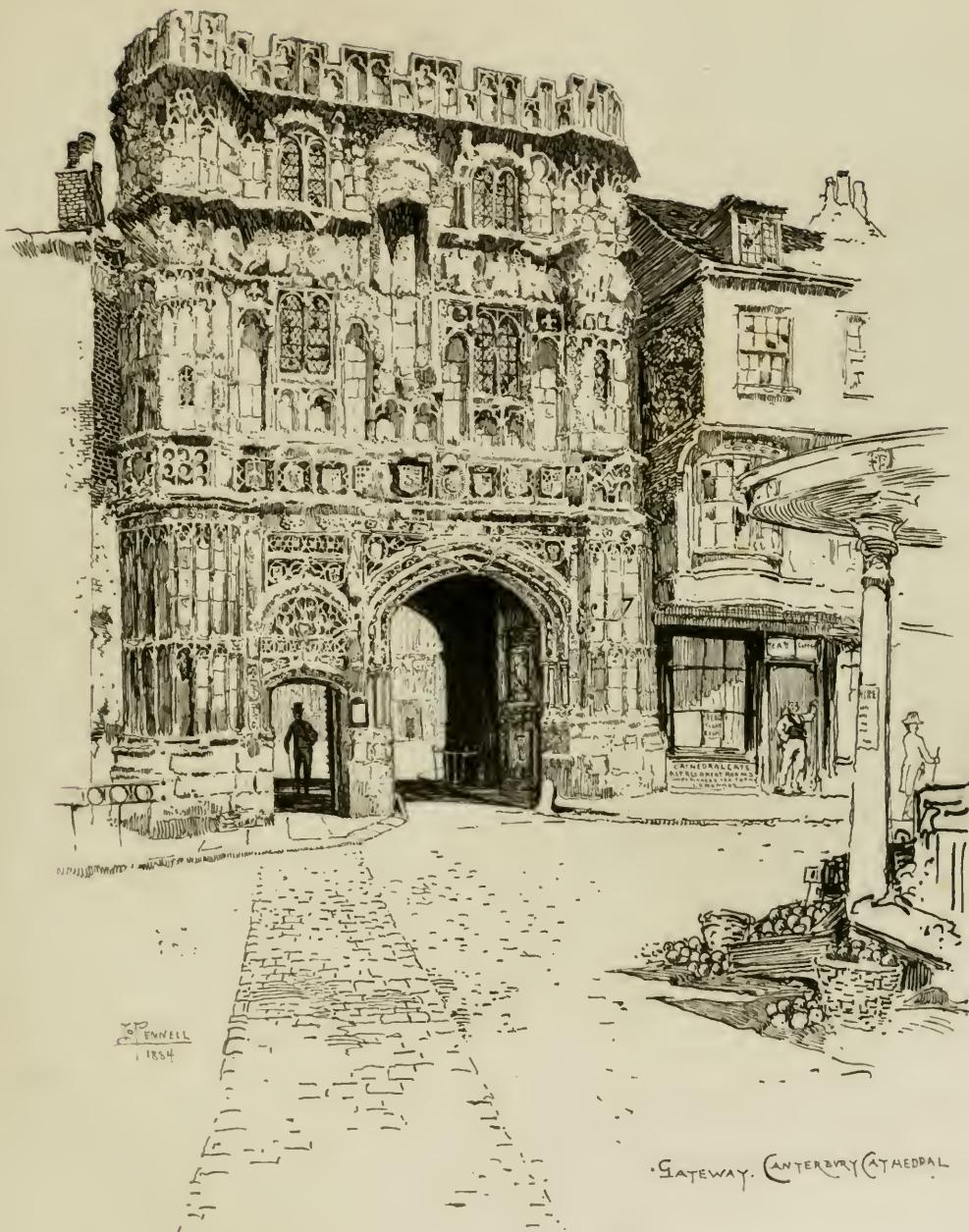
One feature of Canterbury on which all old writers love to expatiate is the beauty and convenience of its river, the Stour, the 'swift stream,' which gave the city its British name, Durwhern. 'One commendation that our city hath—and worthily,' writes Somner, 'from Malmesbury, is the river's watering of it.' While one branch of the Stour flowed outside the walls by the West Gate, the other and principal stream ran through the midst of the city, crossing the High Street at the King's Bridge, and branching off into several smaller currents. The course of these smaller streams has been considerably altered, but the river still flows through the heart of Canterbury, and lends this quarter of the town a romantic element which adds greatly to its interest. These massive walls, resting on arches built in the bed of the stream; these piles of houses and broken, irregular line of roofs; these tall chimney-stacks, projecting gables, and low dormer windows; these slender wooden balconies and palisades; these lichen-grown walls and buttresses of stone, rising from the water's edge, are as fair in their way as the back canals of Venice itself. Here and there grassy banks and pleasant gardens mingle with the houses along the waterside, and a young oak or ash starting up among the tumbled roofs and blackened walls hangs its leaves of sunny green over the stream. Sometimes even, when we pause before a ruined gateway or convent window, where hawthorn and ivy grow tangled together in thick clusters, and watch the changing colours reflected in the bright ripples at our feet, we forget for the moment that we are in England, and find ourselves dreaming of that far-away City in the Sea.

In old times the mills along the banks of the Stour were important sources of revenues to the different religious houses, to whom they belonged, and proved a fertile source of contention between the monks and the citizens, who complained that the former cut off their supplies of water by raising of the locks or making fresh channels for their own

benefit. Abbot's Mill in the meadows belonged to the Abbot and monks of St. Augustine from time immemorial. Westgate Mill is described in Domesday Book as the property of the Archbishops, one of whom, Archbishop Peckham, was accused of improving his own mill at the expense of his neighbours by diverting water from the bed of the stream; while in Stephen's reign no less than seven mills in or near the city belonged to the monks of Christ Church.

But the most important was the King's Mill, which, originally Crown property, was given by Stephen to Hugh, Abbot of St. Augustine, in return for the sum of 100 marks, which he advanced as ransom when the king was taken prisoner by Robert, Earl of Gloucester. In the following reign it was again yielded to the Crown by Abbot Clarembald, and, tradition says, granted by Henry II. to Becket's sister for her lifetime after the Archbishop's murder. Finally Henry III. gave the mill to the city, whose property it remained from that time. The King's Mill stood close to the old bridge, sometimes called King's Bridge, but more commonly East Bridge, in High Street, the great central thoroughfare leading from the West Gate to St. George's Gate on the east side of the city. Over this bridge came all the countless processions that entered by the West Gate—kings and queens, royal and imperial pilgrims, newly-created archbishops on their way to the Cathedral and to Becket's shrine. Henry II., on his memorable pilgrimage to do penance at his victim's tomb; the French King John, on his return home-wards; Erasmus and Colet, descending from Harbledown, with the vision of the Cathedral in their eyes and the sound of its bells ringing in their ears—all passed over this bridge. This way that joyous procession of monks and citizens, crowned with garlands and making merry music, went out to welcome the Archbishop who had once been a poor student in the Grammar School; this way came the sable-plumed hearse and long train of mourners who bore the Black Prince to his grave. Older than the hero of Crecy's days, older than those of Archbishop Winchelsea, is the foundation on East Bridge, which still survives to-day, the Hospital of St. Thomas the Martyr.

Some doubts have been expressed whether this 'ancient Spittle of East Bridge' was really founded by Thomas-à-Becket, but it was certainly in existence a few years after his death; and its oldest charter, drawn up by Archbishop Stratford in the fourteenth century, expressly says that this hospital was founded by the glorious St. Thomas the Martyr to receive poor wayfarers. About the year 1200 it was endowed by Archbishop Hubert with the tithes of Westgate Mill and other mills belonging to Christ Church, and at the same time a neighbouring hospital



GATEWAY, CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

founded by a citizen named Cokyn was annexed to it. Archbishop John of Stratford, who in later acts is often called the founder, and who first drew up statutes for its government, finding the hospital meanly endowed and in a ruinous state, repaired the walls, increased its endowment, and, in order to ensure its proper administration, required the Master to render a full and particular account of the expenses to the Archbishop between Michaelmas and All Saints.

In those days, when thousands of all rank and station flocked 'from every shire-end of England' to visit the shrine of St. Thomas, the hospital which bore his name was thronged with poor pilgrims who were not august enough to be entertained at the convents, and could not afford to take up their quarters at the Chekers Inn. Here they were offered a night's lodging; twelve beds were provided, eight for men and four for women, and if hurt or sick, and unable to depart, might remain longer. A woman of honest life and over forty years of age was appointed to attend upon the pilgrims, and to supply their wants at the rate of fourpence a-day. Those who died within the hospital enjoyed the privilege of being buried within the precincts of Christ Church, and the garden of the pilgrims was freed from the payment of tithes by a papal bull.

While the enthusiastic devotion for St. Thomas lasted many were the bequests and alms which East Bridge Hospital received from wealthy pilgrims to his shrine. Most of its revenues were drawn from vast estates in the Forest of Blean. In the fourteenth century a certain Sir John Lee left 180 acres in the village of Blean, besides a yearly payment of nine cocks and twenty-one hens 'for the increase of works of piety in the said hospital.' In 1362 Archbishop Simon of Islip transferred a chantry founded by the Bourne family to East Bridge Hospital, and appointed a chaplain to assist the Master in saying daily masses

and prayers for the founders and benefactors. But even in those days it was almost impossible to find an 'honest man' who would submit to the perpetual residence required of him for the small sum of ten marks a-year; and thirteen years later another archbishop—Simon of Sudbury—added five and a half marks to the poor chaplain's scanty salary. The money was supplied by the yearly rent of a house known as *La Chaunge* in the High Street, formerly a Royal Exchange, which Edward III. bequeathed to

this hospital in order to help in the maintenance of a chantry-priest, who was especially enjoined to pray for the soul of Isabella, the King's *most dear mother!* This priest resided in a house between the infirmary and great gate of the hospital; and when the chantry was abolished in the second year of Edward VI., Nicholas Clerke, the chantry priest there, is described as a man of the 'age of XL. yeares,' of honest bearing, qualities, and conversation, and depending for his subsistence entirely upon his yearly stipend of 9*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

The Hospital itself, however, escaped the general fate of these foundations at the Dissolution, and was still open to poor and hurt wayfarers at the time of Cardinal Pole's Visitation

in 1577, until in Elizabeth's reign the house and lands were seized by private persons for their own use. These intruders were expelled by Archbishop Parker, who turned the Hospital into a refuge for the poor and maimed soldiers who should pace backwards and forwards through Canterbury. After this it passed into the hands of one of the Queen's gentlemen, until, in 1584, Archbishop Whitgift instituted a lawsuit, by which he regained the property of the hospital, and drew up statutes, regulated by Act of Parliament, for its management.

At the present time five brothers and sisters inhabit the old house, built on strong foundations in the bed of the river, and often flooded by the stream

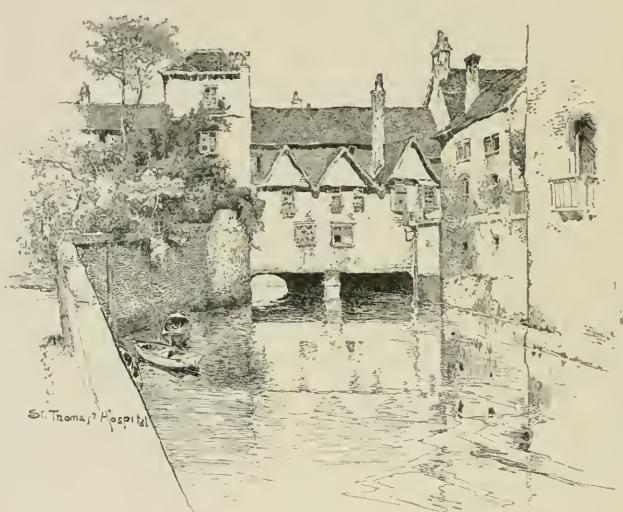


in former days, as the low level of the floor, which is much below that of the street outside, would lead us to expect. The vaulted roof and bent pillars of the interior bear witness to its great age; and while the Early English arches which support the refectory and the pointed windows of the chapel belong to the period of Archbishop Stratford's restoration, the low, round arches of the crypt carry us back to Norman times, and probably formed part of Becket's original foundation. On the walls of the refectory, only lately recovered from the layers of whitewash under which they were concealed during more than two centuries, are remnants of frescoes, in which the martyrdom of Becket and the penance of Henry II. at his tomb, by the side of the Last Supper, and a central figure of the glorified Christ, were represented for the devout contemplation of the pilgrims who enjoyed the hospitality of St. Thomas.

Two or three hundred years ago this corner of High Street was far more picturesque, as we learn from old prints, which show us the King's Mill and gables of the hospital, on either side of the bridge, and old All Saints Church, with its tower projecting into the street, and a large square clock on a beam flung high across the road between the steeple and opposite houses. On the roof of this church, now unfortunately replaced by a modern structure, the city minstrels are recorded to have greeted the entry of James I. and his sister Elizabeth of Bohemia with 'playing of loud music,' as they passed up the High Street on their way to Christ Church. On the other side of East Bridge, close to the hospital, there stood until the last century two gateways, each leading to a ruined monastery. The archway on the same side of the street as the hospital led to the Franciscan convent; that opposite, near St. Peter's Church, was the entrance to the Dominican priory.

Towards the close of Stephen Langton's life, in the autumn of 1224, nine brothers of the new Minorite Order landed at Dover. Fired with the apostolic zeal and love of souls which animated their

great founder, then still alive, they came to win back to Christ those who had strayed from His fold, to revive new ardour in the Church on these distant British shores. Like Francis, they were of the people, and for the most part ignorant and illiterate men. Their poverty was real, and they owed even the money for their passage to some charitable French monks of Fécamp. On their arrival at Canterbury they lodged in a small room lent them by the monks of Christ Church under the school-house; and in the evening, in company with some of the scholars who joined them, they kindled a fire, and, warming their beer, passed the cup merrily round, all drinking from one pot. In this way they obeyed the rule of Francis, who told them not to shut themselves up within convent walls, but to mingle freely with other men, and let their example and influence preach Christ to the world. While four members of the little band went on to London, the others remained at Canterbury, where they received a kindly welcome from the aged primate, who felt the im-



portance of the new order as a help to the clergy in dealing with the dense population of large towns, and at once recognised how well adapted to the masses was their rude and vigorous style of preaching. Following their master's pattern literally, these first Franciscans lived among the people, in the darkest lanes and most crowded alleys of the city, tending the lepers, nursing the sick. Poorer than the poorest, without home or possessions, having forsaken all for Christ, they begged their way from door to door, sharing the coarse, scanty fare of the lowest of the people, helping them to bear their heavy burdens of daily toil and sorrow.

Unfortunately, the rapid rise of the Mendicants to riches and influence proved fatal to the spirit of St. Francis' rule. Forgetful of their founder's teaching, his followers began to acquire large estates and spacious houses; and as early as 1259 Matthew Paris wrote bitterly of their enormous wealth and of the unscrupulous means by which they sought to attain

power. As in London the Friars first lived in Stinking Lane and finally settled in splendid quarters on the banks of the Thames, so at Canterbury they moved from their first humble dwelling to a new home, Binnewith, an island formed by the different branches of the river in the parishes of All Saints and St. Peter, and given to them in 1273 by one of the city bailiffs, Alderman Diggs. Here their monastery arose, with its church and burial-ground, which became, after the fashion of the age, a favourite place of sepulture for wealthy benefactors of the Order, who hoped thus to make certain of their souls' future welfare. Their buildings covered a large extent of ground between Stour Street and St. Peter's Street, and their orchards and garden stretched all along the banks of the river. To this day the remains of walls and gateways mark the site, and among them is one beautiful fragment — a lonely house built on pointed arches over the river. With its high-pitched roof and gable, its surroundings of fresh green and blooming river-banks reflected in the shining waters below, and a low garden wall of red brickwork overgrown with creeping honeysuckle and roses in the foreground, this old house of the Grey

Friars presents the most charming picture. The ancient pile gains a new interest in our eyes when we learn that it afterwards belonged to the family of Richard Lovelace, the Cavalier poet of Stuart times, famous alike for his beauty and misfortunes. In this very house both his grandfather and father resided, while the latter died here in 1629; and although Althea's poet was doomed to a wretched end in a London alley, his memory invests the old convent walls with a glamour of romance. If he did nothing else, his name deserves to live for the sake of those oft-quoted lines:—

‘I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.’

The Dominicans, or Black Friars, arrived in England a few years before the Franciscans, but did not settle at Canterbury until 1236, when their chief patron, Henry III., gave them a grant of land in the parish

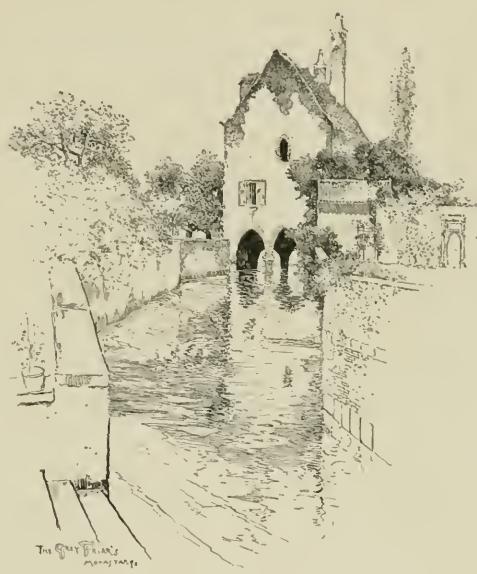
of St. Alphege, and further helped them with large gifts of money and timber. Thus, within half a century from their first landing at Dover, both the Mendicant Orders had a large settlement on the banks of the Stour; and it is not to be wondered that their wealth excited the jealous hatred of the most ancient Orders, especially of the monks of Christ Church, whose land the friars frequently appropriated unjustly, and generally managed to retain.

The Preaching Friars were, in a special manner, the champions of the popular cause against the monks of Christ Church, and lent the citizens their aid in many a quarrel with these powerful foes. On one occasion, when the monks refused to contribute towards levying a contingent of twelve horsemen which Edward I. required for his expedition against the Welsh prince, the citizens held a public meeting in the grounds of the Black Friars, and passed a number of resolutions practically sending the monks to Coventry. All rents due to Christ Church were declared to belong to the commons; no man was to have any dealings with them, to send or sell them any provisions. Their horses and their beasts were to be seized, and any monks who dared

to issue from the gates

were to be stripped of their clothes. Fortunately this warfare, which at one time threatened to assume serious proportions, was stopped by the prudence of the Archbishop, Robert Kilwardby, who, himself a Dominican friar and a man of courage and sense, acted as peacemaker between the monks and the angry citizens.

The Blackfriars Monastery was on a vast scale. The church and cloisters, refectory, dormitories, and offices, formed a large quadrangle in the parish of St. Alphege, and were connected with the gardens and orchards on the opposite banks of the river by a bridge of Gothic arches. From this point a road called the Friars' Way led to the entrance opposite Eastbridge Hospital, a fine arched gateway, faced with black flints and adorned with statues of saints erected in Edward the Third's reign, and only destroyed at the end of the last century. Of all these extensive buildings the monks' refectory alone remains



to-day. This is used at the present time as a Unitarian chapel, but the pointed arches and traceried windows, the time-worn gables and buttresses, rising so picturesquely from the water edge, remain to tell the tale of its origin.

Of the Augustine, or White Friars' house, which stood in the eastern part of the town, near St. George's Gate, not a trace is left. All three Orders were broken up at the Dissolution, and on the 24th of December, 1538, Ingworth, Bishop-Suffragan of Dover, who was appointed to execute the wholesale work of destruction, wrote to Cromwell, saying that he had that day made an end of the three friars' houses. Both the King and Cranmer bore a grudge against the Canterbury Mendicants. Three years before, the Dominican Prior had, in the face of the Archbishop, boldly declared the Pope's supremacy; and Hugh Rich, the Warden of the Grey Friars, had been put to death, in 1534, as guilty of conspiring with Elizabeth Barton, the poor Nun of St. Sepulchre's, who in her fall dragged so many nobler victims along with her. Another of her companions on the scaffold was Richard Dering, the cellarer of Christ Church, of whom Somner remarks unkindly that 'he conspired with the Holy Maid of Kent, and saluted Tyburn for his pains.'

Most of the hospitals and other charitable foundations of Canterbury either shared the fate of the religious houses at the Dissolution, or were from that time allowed to fall into decay, and the only ancient hospital besides that of Eastbridge which has any remains of importance to show is that of St. John, in the busy and populous Northgate.

Of all the mediaeval hospitals of Canterbury this one is the oldest. It was founded in 1084, 'to receive the lame, the blind, and the sick,' by Lanfranc, who at the same time endowed the 'twin foundation' of St. Nicholas at Harbledown as an asylum for lepers. If we turn aside from Northgate Street and pass under the fine old gable-roofed, timbered archway which forms the entrance to the hospital, we find ourselves at once in the 'spacious court,' where Eadmer tells us

the great Norman archbishop 'built a faire and large house of stone, adding to it several habitations, contrived in the best manner, for the benefit of those that dwell therein. This building he divided into two parts, and designed one part for Infirm Men, the other for Infirm Women. He provided them with food and raiment at his own charge, and appointed officers who should see that they wanted nothing.'

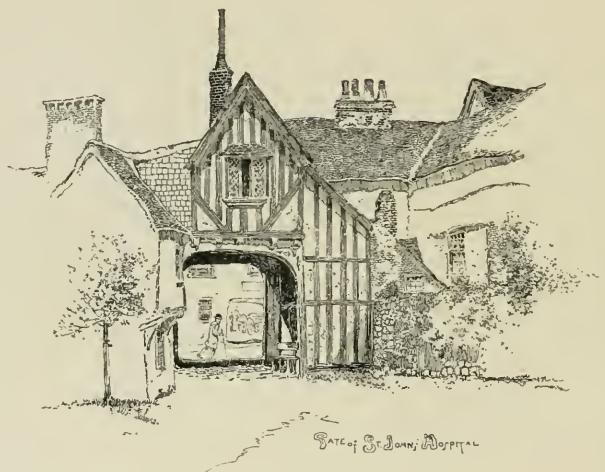
In his thoughtfulness for the poor of his Hospital Lanfranc also founded a priory of secular priests, who were to minister to the infirm people 'whatsoever was necessary for the good of their souls, and take care of their burial.' To this priory, which stood on the other side of Northgate Street, exactly opposite St. John's, Lanfranc gave the name of the great pope who had sent Augustine forth on his mission.

The clerks of St. Gregory are mentioned in Domesday Book and many later records, and in a charter of 1227 there is a curious stipulation that they are to send a basket of the best fruit from their orchard at dinner-time, on or before the 15th day of September, to the refectory of Christ Church, in acknowledgment of the fact

that a water-course belonging to the monks of Christ Church ran through their garden.

To return to St. John's Hospital, seventy years after its foundation Thomas-à-Becket's successor, the good and gentle Archbishop Richard, increased Lanfranc's original endowment to 80*l.* a-year, and in the fourteenth century the hospital contained as many as a hundred brothers and sisters.

In the reign of Edward III. a great part of the buildings were burnt down by a disastrous fire. On this occasion several of the brothers were sent round the country with a letter addressed to prelates in general, begging for alms to repair the damage, and, as 'the most persuasive Rhetoric of that age,' enumerating the indulgences granted to all benefactors of St. John's Hospital by former archbishops, and promising all charitable donors the benefit of the thirty thousand 'Paternosters' and 'Ave Marias' recited daily by its inmates. This appeal seems to have proved successful, since from that time the custom of



sending out brethren to beg for alms twice a-year was kept up long after the Reformation.

Fresh statutes for the government of the hospital were drawn up by Archbishop Parker, who enjoined all brothers and sisters to attend church twice a-day, and neither to sleep or jangle during prayers, under penalty of being placed in the stocks, while more serious offences were to be visited by expulsion from the house.

Lanfranc's pious foundation is still maintained in the present day, and the aged brothers and sisters of St. John's dwell side by side in this peaceful retreat, safely shut in by these grey walls from the noise and bustle of the street. They have their houses and their gardens, their daily services in the old chapel and their yearly feast on St. John's Day. Many of the old houses were pulled down in the last century, 'to be replaced,' says a contemporary, 'by smaller and less convenient ones.' What was worse, the steeple and north aisle of the church were ruthlessly destroyed. 'All this,' adds the same writer, 'was done

by way of improvement;' and 'the very brave window' of the choir, representing the twelve apostles, mentioned by Somner, perished about the same time. A Norman doorway still remains on the west side of the church, and we see other traces of Lanfranc's buildings in the round arches and massive blocks of masonry near the chapel and churchyard. Both the dining-hall and the kitchen below, which still contain the original oak tables and benches with other curiosities, in the shape of huge turnspits, pewter flagons, and kitchen utensils of the period, belong to the sixteenth century. Like the more splendid foundation of St. Cross at Winchester, which St. John's, with its smooth-shaven grass-plot, its old grey houses, and aged brothers, vividly recalls, this still more ancient hospital is one of those pictures of mediaeval life which, although few and rare, still meet us in unexpected places, and which we value for their quaint and venerable charm, for the flavour of antiquity which these relics of bygone days impart to our more prosaic age.

JULIA CARTWRIGHT.



THE BLENHEIM PICTURES.

THE stream of pictures which flowed northwards and westwards into England for a hundred and fifty years and more, has, within the last decade, begun to ebb so rapidly that long before another century and a half is complete, the accumulations made in the days of the 'Grand Tour' are likely to be dispersed to the four winds of heaven. The great landowners, to whom most of our famous private galleries belong, are growing poorer every day; the laws of entail are becoming laxer; the general thought for the morrow is becoming less; the desire to live one's own life and to leave posterity to take care of itself is rapidly superseding the old ambition to found a family, or to die 'warm,' as the citizen puts it. Within the last three years four of the most famous of English collections have come into

the market; and if we may believe the forecast of one who has exceptional means of knowing what picture owners have in their minds, every great private-gallery in England will be dispersed within the lives of men now living. However that may be, there can be no kind of doubt that extraordinary opportunities for increasing our public collections are about to occur. At present England is richer than any country in the world, except Italy, in Italian pictures; richer than any country in the world, except Spain, in Spanish pictures; and richer than all the rest of the world put together in Dutch and Flemish pictures; but the laws, and customs, and habits of thought, which enabled these great gatherings to be made are failing, while the appetite of foreign countries, and especially of America, for